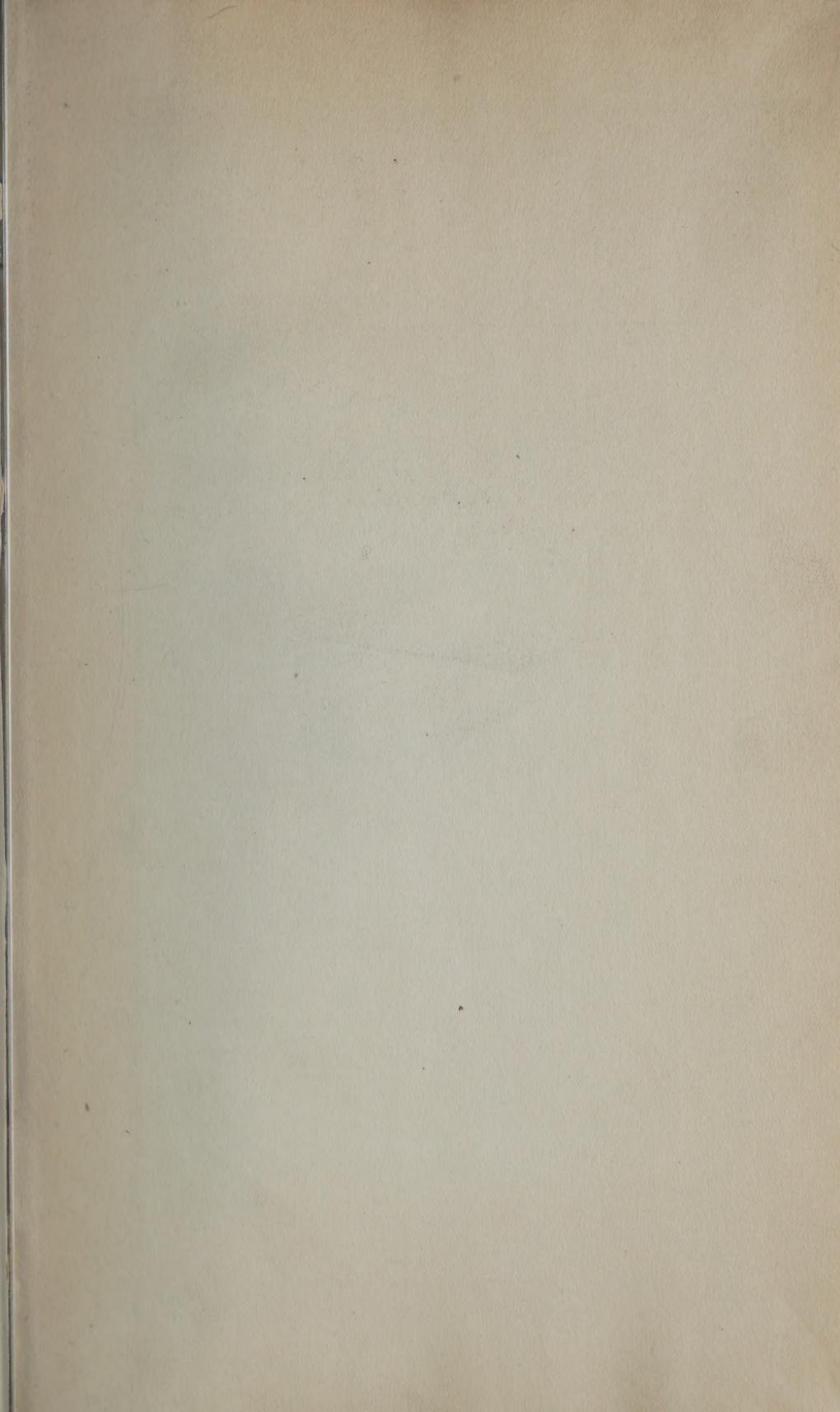




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MR. ELIOT'S ADDRESS,

ON THE OPENING OF THE

ODEON,

Aug. 5, 1835.



# ADDRESS

BEFORE THE

BOSTON ACADEMY OF MUSIC,

ON

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THE OPENING OF THE

## ODEON,

Aug. 5, 1835.

BY SAMUEL A. ELIOT.

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## A D D R E S S.

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THE ACADEMY OF MUSIC have requested me to make an address, suitable to the important occasion of opening, for a new object, and under new auspices, a hall which has long been devoted to purposes of public amusement. It is an hour of much interest ; and I wish the pleasant task of addressing an audience like the one I see assembled, had been confided to abler hands, and a more eloquent tongue. I shall trust, however, to your familiar acquaintance with the subject, to supply any defect in the manner of treating it, and shall throw myself on your indulgence, while I speak for a few moments of the just claims of Music upon the attention and interest of the community.

It may be well, first to explain, briefly, how it happens that we are assembled in this place to-night ; and in order to do this, I must refer to the exertions of a distinguished member of the

Academy,\* advantageously known to the public, by his judicious and successful labors in the cause of education.

This gentleman, on a tour through Europe, a few years ago, was struck with the fact that music is a part of early education to a far greater extent than with us, in several of the countries he visited. He saw its practicability, and witnessed its good effects ; and on his return home, he resolved to attempt to rescue the art from the neglect in which it had so long been buried among us, and to introduce it as a branch of general education. To his efforts, it is principally owing that the Boston Academy of Music was established ; and to him, also, it is to be ascribed, that so efficient an impulse, and so just a direction, was given to its labors at the outset. Having secured the co-operation of well known and highly valued professors, the Academy proceeded in the formation and instruction of juvenile classes in singing, satisfied that the experiment only was wanting to convince the public there was nothing visionary in their plans. The experiment succeeded beautifully. Nothing could surpass the favorable reception of the first public performances of the well taught children ; and the interest excited has been gradually and strongly increasing, till it was thought advisable, a few months ago, to secure a permanent place

\* William C. Woodbridge.

for the exhibitions of the Academy. Fortunately its government was not found wanting in that spirit of cool, determined enterprise, which, without extravagance, produces striking results. A contract was entered into with the proprietors of this building for a term of years ; its interior structure was altered ; and it is now presented to you, in its new form, not as a theatre, but under a new name, as an Odeon, or musical hall, devoted henceforth to the purposes of art, of science, and of religion.

As it was under the auspices of the Academy that this most desirable change was effected, I shall speak only of the objects which it had in view from the outset ; and though it may sound strangely to make an elaborate eulogy on an art, which, in all ages of the world, has been recognized as one of the most delightful that can be practised, and which, by no very extravagant exaggeration, has been even called *divine* ; yet so much error has existed among us, both as to its design and its effect ; it has been so hardly judged, in consequence of the bad taste or the bad character of some who have practised it, that it may be of use simply to state what effects it is designed and is able to produce.

Nearly all sounds, natural and artificial, from the overwhelming crash of the thunder, or the deep toned roar of the cataract, to the animated song of the happy bird ; from the lowest bass of

the organ, to the shrill note of the fife, or the harsh rattle of the drum ; from the sublime voice of the tempest, to the gentle sigh of the zephyr ; from the shout of the man to the laughing prattle of the infant, are adapted to excite emotion ; and music is the science of adapting, and the art of producing those sounds, and combinations of sound, best suited to create the emotions intended to be awakened within us.

It is manifest, that if any considerable degree of proficiency be made in music, it is an agent of great power for good or for evil ; and in every age, and in every country, powerful emotions have been excited by music adapted to the degree of civilization of the people and the time. Even in our own unmusical age and nation, who is there can resist the contagious effect of the lively march, the solemn dirge, or the dance-moving air of the ball-room ? These are but some of the coarser and more obvious effects of an art susceptible of every degree of refinement ;—and the variety of feelings excited by music, can be limited only by the capacity of our nature.

From these appeals to the feelings, the emotions, the passions, music derives its moral power ; and it is also the direct source of pleasure to the ear, from the adaptation of the sounds it produces to give enjoyment to that delicate organ ; and it is a very valuable accessory in the intellectual development of the faculties, from the

excellent mental discipline conveyed by the study of its theory and practice.

To these three points I wish to invite your attention, viz. : its importance as an auxiliary in education ; the pleasure it conveys to the ear ; and its power of producing emotion.

In a country where the education of the young is so important, and has, from the earliest period, received so much attention, and excited so deep an interest as in our own, it is certainly singular that the aid of music has not been sought to stimulate the attention of the youthful student, and introduce those habits of order and method which are indispensable to the acquisition of the art, and are such important means of progress in every species of knowledge. Music is at once a charming relaxation from the tedious task, the dry drudgery of the grammar, the pen, or the slate, and a mode of discipline scarcely inferior in efficacy to the dullest lesson of the horn book, learned under the fear of the searching experiment of the birch or the ferule. It is a study and an amusement, a discipline and a sport. It teaches, in the most attractive manner, the advantage of combined, harmonious action, of submission to rules, and of strict accuracy. All these are necessary to the agreeable result of the practice ; and the attainment of that result is, itself, stimulus and reward sufficient for the required exertion. It produces, in a remarkable degree, the effect at-

tributed by a classic poet to all the elegant arts, of softening the character and refining the manners. Nothing is more obvious than the change of tone, in children of the rougher sex, which follows a moderate proficiency in this exquisite accomplishment. Are these tendencies of no value, or of slight importance? Surely not. The teacher, who experiences so often the want of some agreeable stimulus to the flagging attention, and the need of relaxing his own toil, will seize upon music with grateful avidity; while the pupil will wonder what has become of the weariness he felt a moment before, and his eye will brighten, and his apprehension quicken, at the first sound of the music lesson.

But, perhaps, it may be said this is all imaginary. It is a fine thing to talk about, but how can it be done? How can a school full of children be taught to sing, when it is so difficult to teach a single pupil, who has the exclusive attention of a master for hours of every day? The simplest, most direct, and most satisfactory answer to this question, is a reference to the schools which have been, and are now taught by the professors of the Academy. No difficulty occurs in teaching those rudiments of music which are all it is necessary to give; and no doubt can be entertained of the favorable tendency of the study, by those who will examine for themselves into its result. But though this

is the shortest, it is by no means the only answer to be given. Throughout the whole extent of northern Germany, every child who goes to school is as sure to be taught to sing as to read. The exceptions are almost as few to the capacity of learning something of music, as to that of learning to spell ; and serve, in fact, only to show the general prevalence of what is erroneously thought so rare—an ear for music. The obstacle in this country, and in some others, which has produced an opposite impression, is, that the attainment of musical knowledge has been deferred till a period of life when the facility of acquisition is diminished, and the organs are less flexible than in early youth ; while the instruction has been given on the plan of benefit to the teacher rather than the taught ; its difficulties have been unnecessarily magnified ; and it has been attempted to make every pupil a first rate solo singer. It has, too, been unfortunately regarded as a mere accomplishment, which might as well be left to the pursuit of the young, the frivolous and the worldly, and was unworthy the attention of the parent, seriously anxious for the education of his child.

It is the aim of the Academy to correct these errors and to reform this unwise practice ; to teach the elements of music to as many children as possible, at as early an age as practicable, and thus, while giving to many the benefit of its dis-

cipline, to discover those who have any particular aptitude for its prosecution to a more advanced degree of skill, and to save, for better purposes, the weary hours which have been wasted by so many unhappy daughters of song, in attempting the difficult air, or to them impossible *bravura*.

It is not necessary to the understanding or enjoyment of good music, whether vocal or instrumental, that one should be able to perform it one's self, (an idea that has been strangely prevalent in some of our churches,) but some acquaintance with the design of music, and its means of accomplishing its own designs, is necessary ; and this knowledge will be very generally diffused, if the academy should be successful in its plans. Part of the effect, therefore, of the operations of our academy, will be to make good listeners, as well as good performers, and one is scarcely less desirable than the other.

It ought not to be omitted, in enumerating the advantages of a musical education, that its effect on the physical constitution, on the development and healthy action of the organs principally exercised by it, is decidedly beneficial ; and in a country and climate in which pulmonary diseases are so prevalent, every remedy, especially of an agreeable and preventive kind, should be diligently used.

An advantage of the mode of teaching adopted by the Academy, of numbers together, over the

old mode of drilling one at a time, is the increased delight which is felt by the learner. A simple melody may be charming, but a well arranged harmony is far more so to every ear; and by the combinations of the different parts, every class of pupils may be gratified with this additional charm, and every school may judge of their own progress, not merely by their increased skill, but by the increased pleasure arising from their own performances.

And what a pleasure is that derived from music! There are many refined and high gratifications, which, by the goodness of God, we are permitted to taste. Every sense is made the means of enjoyment. Every nerve conveys pleasurable sensations to the perceiving mind. We cannot look on the works of the Creator, we cannot open our eyes, without pleasure; we cannot satisfy our appetites without at the same time gratifying our palates. We cannot breathe the fragrant air without delight. But though every sense has thus its appropriate pleasures, which are neither few nor small, which are spread around us, if we will but observe them, with an abundance which nothing but infinite beneficence could have drawn from the stores of infinite wisdom and infinite power; yet I cannot hesitate to place foremost in these gratifications of sense, that which flows in upon the ear from the sweet, the rich, the ever-varying combinations of music.

Is there any thing which can be compared to the liquid harmony of well selected instruments ; the graceful air upon the soft reed ; or the delicate touch of the vibrating string ; or the noble swell of the soul thrilling organ ; unless, indeed, it be the simple strain of a rich voice, or the skilful modulations of one well cultivated ? But when these are united and combined as scientific composers know how to use them ; when we listen to the air, the chorus, the overture, the accompaniment, the vocal and the instrumental sounds which are mingled, and varied, alternately separated and joined together in exquisite melodies, or grand harmony, we drink in a delight which nothing else in nature or art can give ; we revel in an ecstacy, waked by the living lyre, which cannot be produced by any, the happiest combinations, of the other senses. And we enjoy all this with the accompanying conviction of the purity, innocence, and elevation of this mode of spending an hour of leisure. Music has been called “the only sensual pleasure without sin.” I cannot go so far, as I should be sorry to think there were sin in admiring a beautiful landscape, or enjoying the perfume of the exquisite flower. Sin is excess, not temperate enjoyment ; and I am far from denying that there may be excessive devotion to music. But it is not asserting too much to say that there is a refinement, a mixture of intellectual occupation in this pleasure of the ear,

which can hardly be found in the gratifications of the other senses.

Our puritan forefathers thought otherwise. They eschewed all kinds of instrumental music for the same reason that they rejected the robes and the ceremonial of the church from which they separated themselves, as partaking too much of the frivolity, or the priestcraft, they despised and abhorred. Notwithstanding, therefore, the frequent and complacent mention of instruments of music, of many kinds, in their favorite books of the Old Testament; and notwithstanding it was an employment of the prophet and king of Israel to compose poetry to be sung in public worship, and accompanied, probably, by those very instruments, they confined the natural impulse to music which can scarcely be repressed, to the harsh sound of their own untrained voices, repeating the somewhat uncouth verses of their psalm or sacred song. Perhaps the unnecessary severity, not to call it a slight tinge of cruelty, which was one of their characteristics, may not unfairly be ascribed, in part, to their contempt for an art that would have softened their sternness, if any thing could have changed the unbending quality of their strength.

In later times, too, even in our own day, a feeling of distrust, if not absolute dislike of music, has pervaded the serious, and I may safely call that the better portion of the community,

from its association, and till a recent period, its almost exclusive association, with the dangerous attractions of the theatre, or the bacchanalian festivity.

But we must learn in this, as in other things, to distinguish between the use and the abuse, the proper and natural connection, and the artificial and unnecessary combination. If there is danger in the character of the public amusement, let the child be interested in the domestic concert ; and what more charming picture of innocent and improving relaxation can be presented to the mind's eye, than that of a family, happy enough to have acquired in youth the requisite skill, and combining their several powers and attainments in the production of heavenly harmony ? It can hardly fail to produce that harmony of heart, of which that of their voices is a sweet and suitable emblem.

It certainly will not fail ; for music has a moral power which, under such circumstances, cannot be resisted by any human heart. Who, indeed, can resist its power under any circumstances ? Can we hear animated music without cheerfulness, or sad music without sympathy, or solemn music without awe ? Is there any feeling of our nature to which music is not or may not be addressed, and which, when properly adapted, it does not heighten and increase ? One is almost ashamed to state a proposition so like a truism.

Its power is, in some degree or other, acknowledged by all, while it is, of course, most felt by those whose sensibility has been improved by cultivation.

Whatever may be said of the power of music over the emotions and feelings, will be liable to the charge of exaggeration from those who are less sensible to it; and at the same time, it is so great over the majority of persons as hardly to be susceptible of exaggeration. If the mind is to be excited or soothed, thrilled with horror or with delight, touched with kindness, or hardened into severity, softened with pity, or filled with awe, or stirred to sudden mutiny against the better affections, what can produce these effects with more certainty or power than music? Even language, unaided by music, has perhaps less effect than music without the aid of language. But when they are combined for a given purpose, when melody is wedded to immortal verse, then it is that every feeling is under the control of the musician, and he can rouse or subdue every emotion of the human breast. This must necessarily be stated in general terms, as there is not time to illustrate the position in detail. But I appeal to the recollection of every one who hears me; I ask if there is any thing which has left upon your memory a deeper impression of tenderness, of reverence, of awe, of beauty or of sublimity, than has been produced by the concerted pieces,

the accompanied airs and choruses, of eminent composers.

Does the mother ever fail to sooth the little irritations of infancy by her gentle song? Was ever a soldier insensible to the angry blast of the trumpet? Is it possible to listen without strengthened affection to the voices of those we love? Or is there any doubt that music has given additional power to the seductions of vicious amusement, as well as greater strength to the aspirations of our holier feelings? We must cultivate music of a pure and refined character, not merely to counteract the effect of that which is not so, but that we may give a new power to the better tendencies of our nature, that we may have its aid in raising what in us is low, reforming what is wrong, and carrying forward to perfection whatever is praiseworthy.

If this be so, is it any thing less than a duty we owe to ourselves and to society to watch well what kind of music is to be cultivated among us, what kinds of passion are to be excited by it, what kinds of feeling are to be stimulated by its sympathetic power? It is for the purpose of attempting our part in the performance of this social duty, that we now dedicate this hall to pure, and elevating, and holy harmony. No corrupting influence shall henceforth be spread from these walls; but here shall the child be early taught the beauty and the charm of an exquisite

art. Its own voice shall aid in the development and expansion of the best feelings of its heart ; and love to its fellow mortal, and a holy fear of its God shall grow with its knowledge and its stature. Here shall the adult practise on the lessons of youth, and with maturer powers bring a stronger feeling, and a more cultivated understanding to the execution of the most expressive music. Here shall the ear be feasted, and the heart warmed, and the soul raised above every thing base or impure, by the sublimity, the pathos, the delicate expression which music only can give to language. Here shall be trained those who not only feel, but shall acquire the power of making others feel those emotions of love, gratitude, and reverence to God, and of sympathy and kindness to men which are most suitably expressed in the solemn services of the Sabbath ; and here too, shall be sung those anthems of praise to the Most High, which, if they delight us now, will constitute and express the fullness of our joy in the more visible presence of Him whose “ name is excellent in all the earth.”









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